

A Return On Investment with Bio-Augmentation

by
Ray Robin

Henderson, Louisiana is located directly in the center of what is commonly considered 'Cajun Country.' Right next door to Breaux Bridge, the town that is known as 'The Crawfish Capital of the World'; our claim to fame is dealing with the crowds and traffic of that festival every spring. But, Henderson is just fine with that situation, just being the 'bedroom community' of our more frivolous neighbor.



Several years ago we updated our town's wastewater treatment system to a 100,000 GPD SBR, a nice size plant for our town to grow into. Our average BOD influent load is about 250 to 300 mg/l. Most of our customers are residential, and all of them exhibit the common traits of in-home chefs that we are known for in this part of the country. While etouffes, jambalayas, boudin and other Creole and Cajun pork, beef, seafood and fowl dishes are delicacies to most – these are everyday fare for us – and they all provide ample grease and BOD for our sewage system.

In the summer of 2011, at the Louisiana Rural Water Association (LRWA) meeting, I came across a product that promised to cut my sludge hauling costs to the point that it might actually provide a return on investment. At that time we were contracting for hauling a 20 cubic yard trailer load of sludge once a month for disposal. Dewatering chemicals, hauling and tipping fees for this monthly process was \$1000 per load, or \$1000 per month. I thought it would be worth the time to see if the product I was introduced to at the LRWA might help reduce our Operating costs.

In July, Mr. Jim Dartez of Reliant Water Technologies came by our office to discuss the product in detail. He was able to meet with our Mayor, and plant Operator and include them in on the discussion. We took a ride to the plant and he provided specifics on how he would treat our plant and projected what we

should expect. Our Mayor and I decided to give Sewper Rx, a patented, ecologically safe, granulated bacteria mix, a try.

On August 8 Mr. Dartez came by to make the first treatment and train us on how to continue the treatment process into the future. The one thing we like about Sewper Rx is that it does not require special dosing equipment and it only needs to be added to the plant once per month. Once we got the plant inoculated with these special bacteria, it was suggested that we might want to begin adding the product directly into the sewer lines upstream of the plant. This type of treatment would allow the bacteria to settle throughout our sewer system, eliminating the potential for odors and grease buildup – with the bacteria eventually reaching the plant and providing the same level of treatment as we would by dosing directly into the plant.

It turns out that the decision to use Sewper Rx has been an excellent one. By the end of January, almost 6 months following our initial treatment (August 8, 2011) we did not haul a single load of sludge. We finally released a load in the last week of January 2012. Our total cost of the product over that time was \$1,350. The normal cost of disposing of our sludge over the same period, prior to Sewper Rx, would have been almost \$6,000. No matter how this is calculated we had almost a 250% Return on Investment, saving well over \$4,000 in sludge hauling and tipping fees.

No matter how well you run a modern wastewater treatment plant today, the costs of labor, maintenance, electricity, and other operating costs are only going to increase. This is just the nature of the beast and something that those of us in municipal administration must work harder to control. It is truly a pleasure, every once in a while, when a product comes along and actually provides a payback. We have found that Sewper Rx by Reliant Water Technologies provides that benefit.

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